CIL Designs New Web Pages

Looking for information on a Web site should be a pleasant experience. As you navigate the site, you should find easily key words or topics that lead you to Web pages that have the information you are seeking. The pages should provide a path back to where you started as well as point toward new pages that may interest you. The challenge for a Web designer is to organize pages so that you can find what you need.

The Curriculum and Instructional Leadership (CIL) Branch Web Team has developed new topic indexes to organize information across offices, divisions, and branches. The team designed the indexes as tools for helping clients navigate the CDE Web site successfully.

The topics for the indexes represent general categories for more specific topics to be listed. Topics include: Accountability and Assessment; Curriculum; Professional Development; Students; Family, School, and Community; State and Federal Programs;

and Resources and Information. The indexes are listed at the top of the CIL Branch home page:

www.cde.ca.gov/cilbranch

The Web team welcomes suggestions for additions or revisions to the indexes. The names of the indexes with the CIL Branch Web Team member who coordinates them are shown in the chart below. Please contact the appropriate team member to suggest where your Web page should be listed. Entries are limited to one index rather than duplicating them on several.

Seven Topic Indexes

Accountability and Assessment
Curriculum and Instruction
Professional Development
Students in California
Family, School and Community
State and Federal Programs
Resources and Information

Who to Contact for Topic Indexes

Indexes	Contact	Phone
Accountability; Family	Judy White	657-5241
Curriculum	Lino Vicente	657-4557
Professional Development	Jody McCarthy	657-2382
Students; Programs	Grace Massey Holt	657-5121
Resources	Dan Holt	657-3837

Inside this issue:

Web Team Meeting Schedule

- **May 5, 2000, 10 a.m. to Noon, Rm. 556 B**
- **May 18, 2000, 10 a.m. to Noon, Rm. 556 B**
- **May 31, 2000, 10 a.m. to Noon, Rm. 556 B**
- **June 15, 2000, 10 a.m. to Noon, Rm. 556 B**
- **July 7, 2000, 10 a.m. to Noon, Rm. 556 B**
- **July 20, 2000, 10 a.m. to Noon, Rm. 556 B**
- **August 4, 2000, 10 a.m. to Noon, Rm. 556B**

Put it on the Web: *What do I ask before publishing?*

The Internet is becoming a key vehicle for communicating with our clients. As we move toward using this technology, we need to make decisions about when and how to use Web documents to improve our resourcefulness.

Because of the extensive work and resources required for successful Web development, it is important to be judicious in selecting documents for publishing. The following questions are provided to help Web developers and their colleagues cooperate to make decisions about Web publishing.

1. **How important is the document?** Time and resources require careful decision-making about what to publish. High priority documents relate to current Department initiatives; have a long file life; and connect to existing Web documents. Low priority documents contain information available elsewhere; announcements and agendas for events; promotional pieces for printed publications; information not closely connected to existing Department efforts; and documents that will not be promoted after publication.

2. **Is the document ready to publish?** Documents published on the Department's Web site need to conform to the same standards that are used to judge the readiness of printed materials. Before being given to the Web developer, the document needs to pass through standard approval processes used for other materials prepared for public dissemination. The originator of the document should ensure that the content has been approved by the appropriate manager, division director, and Deputy Superintendent Sonia Hernandez.

3. **What kind of Web publication is appropriate?** Documents can be published in a variety of formats. Some are quickly designed; others are very time-consuming. Some are easy to access; others require special tools. Some are plain and simple; others contain complex graphics and color. Formats should be selected based on a careful analysis of the pros and cons related to the client and the Web developer's time and expertise.

4. **What is the connection between the proposed document and other Department publications, letters, or policies?** The Web developer needs to know how the proposed document is related to existing work to decide what publication format to use and how the document can be integrated into the Department's Web site. Without careful planning, the Web site can look like a bulletin board filled with unrelated pieces of information. Web pages need to be integrated with other information produced by the Department.

5. **What happens after the document is published?** Whenever a Web document is published, time and staff resources need to be allocated to maintain it. In addition, effort needs to be made to ensure that Department staff know the document is available on the Internet so that they can refer clients to it. Other communication tools, such as e-mail and regular mail, should be used to publicize new Web documents. Web addresses should be used as commonly as phone numbers in correspondence with clients. When Department staff maintain and market Web pages properly, clients can have the best information we have to offer.

Careful consideration should be given to documents published on the Web. Thoughtful planning can lead to good decisions about how Web pages can work with other communication such as e-mail, written publications, telephone conversations, and public presentations to meet clients' needs.

Collaborative Web Development: *How can I get involved?*

Building a Web site is easier when many people contribute. What can you do to get involved?

Become a content specialist. Each office needs someone who visits our site regularly to look for things to improve. By passing your suggestions on to your division coordinator, you can make sure that the site is the best it can be.

Sit in on a team meeting. Our meetings are open to anyone interested in Web pages. A schedule of meetings is provided on the cover of this newsletter. At the meetings, you can hear what's going on behind the scenes and learn what changes are underway.

Take Web training. The article on page 3 offers suggestions for training. The training will help you decide how you can contribute to the Web site. Maybe you will focus on developing content for Web pages; perhaps you will concentrate on graphics or design; or you might get involved in designing data bases for Web pages. By collaborating with the CIL Branch Web team, you can ensure accurate representation of your work.

PDF or HTML: *What format is best for your document?*

Do you have information you would like posted on the CIL Branch Web site? The CIL Branch Web Team uses two formats to develop documents for the Internet: Adobe Acrobat's Portable Document Format (PDF) and hypertext markup language (HTML). Here are some things to consider as you make decisions about how to format your Web publication.

PDF. A PDF document can be constructed quickly; however, it requires clients to have Adobe Acrobat on their computers. This software can be downloaded free of charge at Adobe's Web Site. Web pages that contain links to PDF documents have directions for downloading the

software. The PDF protocol seems ideal for extremely long documents, such as the curriculum frameworks, or for documents that will not be posted for a long period of time, such as a Request for Applications. Documents that do not require content changes or regular updates are also good candidates for PDF.

HTML. An HTML document is easy for clients to open and view. It can be easily linked to other documents on the Internet, but the code and graphics can be time-consuming to construct and maintain. Documents that lend themselves well to HTML are those that provide visitors with current information, can be connected to other

pages already posted on the Internet, and are easily integrated into the CIL Branch Web site.

The decision to use PDF or HTML is an important one. The format you and your division coordinator decide to use should be based on a careful analysis of the purpose of the document and the time required to develop and maintain it after it is posted on the Internet.

Acrobat Reader can be downloaded free from Adobe's Web Site at:
http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readermain.html

Learning Web Design: *How do I get started in training?*

Would you like to start developing Web pages? The CIL Branch Web Team has developed a handout on the pros and cons of three different approaches to training on Web development. Contact your division coordinator for a copy. A brief discussion of the three training approaches follows.

One-day Sessions. A one-day training provides a quick overview of Web design. It may be useful for an experienced developer or someone who has a background in computer programming. Also, staff who are monitoring Web development but not actually designing pages may benefit from a one-day session to gain an understanding of the needs of Web developers and the strengths and limitations of Web pages.

Sustained Series of Sessions. A college extension course or a class through a community college is the optimal approach for someone new to Web design. Local colleges offer a

number of beginning classes, which rightly involve a pre-requisite class or thorough understanding of the Internet. Most beginning Web classes run about nine weeks. Some schools offer a full semester class that includes both the Internet and Web design.

Compromise. If someone is unable to devote sufficient time, a compromise between the one-day approach and the school classes would be the whole set of beginning, intermediate, and advanced sessions.

Whatever training approach you take, if you are interested in learning HTML code, you may want to avoid courses that focus on HTML editors that use only "wysiwyg" (what you see is what you get) editing. These editors allow you to design a document by moving text and graphics, rather than writing HTML code. Such editors may help you get started coding quickly, and they may also be useful for developing complex documents as you learn HTML. However, as a beginner, you

will be better off learning how to design documents by working in actual HTML code. Learning the basic code will provide the foundation you need to design Web pages that adhere to the standards set by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

Internet Resources. To supplement the training you take, there are many valuable sources of information on the internet. Here are some to consider:

World Wide Web Consortium
www.w3.org

Web Developer's Virtual Library
www.stars.com

HTML Writers Guild
www.hwg.org

CIL Branch Web Team: *Designing for Harmony*

WebWriter is a newsletter designed to disseminate useful information related to the Curriculum and Instructional Leadership (CIL) Branch Web development. Its purpose is to inform, teach, update, and support the team members and other Department staff in their effort to develop high quality Web pages. Along with the CIL Branch Web Team, *WebWriter* readership includes CIL Branch staff members and other Department personnel who develop or use the California Department of Education Web site.

The mission of the CIL Branch Web team is to publish Web resources that are informative, easy to find, technically sound, interactive, supportive of clients' needs, and reflective of the high quality work of staff throughout the California Department of Education. Team members include: Daniel Holt, coordinator; Janet Henner and John Merris-Coots, Standards and High School Development; Jimmy Chien, Grace Massey Holt and Mimi Mattock, Specialized Programs; Jody McCarthy, Professional Development; Lino Vicente, Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources; and Judy White, Education Support and Networks.

We encourage readers to send us their reactions to *WebWriter* as well as articles that could be considered for publication. Email: iasa@cde.ca.gov; or address correspondence to Grace Massey Holt, Policy and Program Coordination Office, Specialized Programs Division, California Department of Education, 721 Capitol Mall, 2nd Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814.

For questions about the team, please contact Dan Holt at 916.657.3837.

CIL Branch Web Team: *What's going on behind the Web pages?*

While designing and maintaining Web pages for the CIL Branch is a major part of their work, the division Web coordinators are also busy with a variety of other activities. In addition to semi-monthly meetings to discuss projects and coordinate efforts, the team also participates in training sessions, project planning meetings, presentations on the CIL Branch Web Site, and coordination of the branch site with the larger CDE site.

Emily Kim Consultation. This spring has been particularly busy with a number of activities to enhance the redesign of the branch site. During March 8-10, 2000, the team worked with Emily B. Kim, Web design consultant, on strategies to improve the quality of the Web pages it manages. Based on her analysis, Ms. Kim helped the team develop more efficient ways of creating Web pages that would be more responsive to the needs of our clients. For example, she emphasized the importance of assigning projects to team members representing a number of divisions, rather than having one division create its own pages. This would enhance the coherence already evident on the pages as a result of steps recently taken by the team. On March 9, Ms. Kim provided hands-on training at the computer lab at the Sacramento County Office of Education.

Sessions during the three-day consultation were attended by all members of the CIL Branch Web Team plus representatives from the Technology Services and Safe Schools and Violence Prevention. Such cross-branch coordination is essential for improving the Web pages of the CIL Branch and those pages throughout the CDE Web site.

Professional Development. On March 20-21 several team members participated in a two-day training session on HomeSite, the editing program that is used for the development of the Branch Web pages. The team is also developing its own two-day training session for April.

Site Promotion. Team members have tried to keep the CIL Branch staff members apprised of the many changes that the Web site has undergone. Team members presented the site to the Specialized Programs Division and the Curriculum Commission in March and to CIL Branch managers in April. The team will display the site at the *School's In* Conference in July. Site promotion makes others aware of the team's work and provides valuable feedback to guide members in future Web development.